

Mary Jo Pugh

The Historic Documents Department

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park

Archives are tools, and like all tools, they are kept to be used. In the reading room of San Francisco Maritime NHP, archives take on another life. They are used both by park staff and by researchers from all over the world for products that have a multiplier effect—distributing knowledge of maritime history to millions of people beyond the reading room. Photo by Campbell/Danford courtesy San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park (SAFR) preserves and interprets the maritime heritage of the Pacific Coast—the history of the trades, technology, traditions, and lifeways of the peoples who lived on or through the sea—with emphasis on the San Francisco Bay Region and its maritime waterways.

The park focuses on four areas:

- Historic structures—including seven historic vessels
- Objects—including small craft, manuscripts, historic documents, and photographs
- Information—including library materials, oral histories, public programs, and publications
- Craftsmanship—assuring the continuation of traditional maritime skills

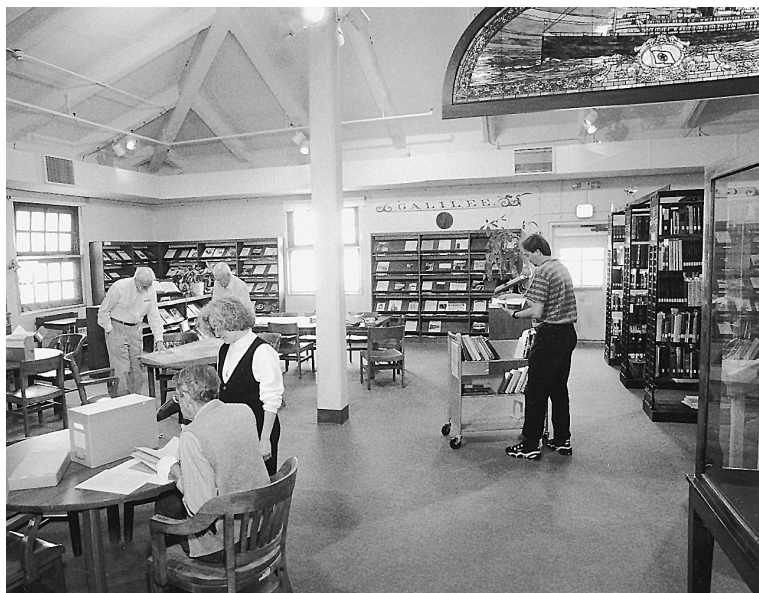
This work began in 1950 with the establishment of the San Francisco Maritime Museum Association. In 1951, the Association opened the San Francisco Maritime Museum in the Aquatic Park Bathhouse building and purchased the square-rigged ship *Balclutha*, which was restored and opened to the public in 1955. In 1957, a California state park unit was established to acquire, restore, and display additional historic ships, such as the schooner *C.A. Thayer*, the steam schooner *Wapama*, the ferry *Eureka*, and the scow schooner *Alma*.

In 1963, the Hyde Street Pier and the historic vessels were opened to the public as the San Francisco Maritime State Historical Park. In 1972 Congress established the Golden Gate National Recreational Area (GGNRA) and over the next decade the vessels and maritime collections, including extensive collections of archives, manuscripts, and photographs, were transferred and consolidated in the Maritime Unit of GGNRA. In 1988, Congress established the San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park as a separate administrative unit.

The mission of the park's Historic Document Department is to identify archives and historical records for acquisition, to preserve them, and to make them accessible for use. Archival and historic document collections in the Historic Documents Department, estimated at 2.4 million items, are managed as part of the museum collection in accordance with NPS policy.

Archives are the working files of working folks, records made or received in the course of daily activities by organizations or individuals, preserved for their continuing usefulness to their creators and the public. Created in the course of purposeful activities, these records provide both evidence of the actions that brought them into being and information about associated people, organizations, events, and places. As communication tools, records are created with many recording technologies and may be in paper, film, microfilm, audio-tape, video-tape, or magnetic storage.

Archival collections document the maritime heritage of the Pacific Coast and include the archives of maritime-related organizations, the personal papers of seafaring Americans, and the archives of the park and its predecessor organizations. Identifying records for acquisition involves two activities: first, an acquisitions program for the archives of maritime-related organizations and individuals; and second, a records management program for the park's own records. Preservation of archival materials is a management function that depends on a continuum of policies and actions, ranging from actions at the repository level at one end to the item level at the other. Accessibility is provided through arrangement, description, and reference services.



Architectural records document vessels as well as buildings. In the background are the original steel racks and tubes built by Union Iron Works for storing its plans of vessels and mining equipment built in San Francisco from 1880 to 1920. Photo by Campbell/Danford courtesy San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

Archives Program

The park has assembled a well-educated and experienced staff to manage its archival program. Staff of the Historic Documents Department consist of three archivists, who collectively have nearly 30 years of experience, a supervisory archivist with nearly 30 years experience, and two photographers with over 20 years of experience.

The Department currently occupies about 6,000 square feet on the third floor and mezzanine levels of Building E, Fort Mason. The basic elements of a sound preservation program are in place. The building has both a sprinkler system and a smoke detection system. Two vaults have temperature/humidity control and Halon fire suppression systems. The third floor is equipped with a motion detector security system and a key monitoring system. The photographers have copied all nitrate negatives onto safety film, and the original negatives are stored in seven flammable materials freezers, equipped with dataloggers. Smoke detectors and a sprinkler system protect the space.

The staff engages in an active acquisitions program, identifying areas for acquisition and working with potential donors. The park acquisitions committee reviews potential donations and recommends to the superintendent that the park acquire those offers found to be significant and valuable. Managing the internal records of the park requires a records management program to ensure sound management of active records by implementing filing procedures, by segregating temporary records from permanent records according to records schedules, and by transferring permanent records to the archives. Park archivists provide records management services to park units. Photographers document park activities, recording actions for accountability, management, and interpretation.

Providing Access to Historic Documents

The third element of the archival mission is making historic documents accessible for interpretation and education, achieved through arrangement, description, reference services, and outreach activities. The arrangement of records serves as the primary mode of access. Records resulting from one activity are kept together and are not mingled in a subject classification with records resulting from other activities. Where possible, the creator's original order within a collection is retained. These principles ensure that the value of records as evi-



dence is preserved. As records are arranged, basic collection level preservation actions are taken in rehousing into appropriate containers. Although segments of collections are physically separated for proper housing (plans, photos, textual records) their intellectual integrity is maintained.

The arrangement of photographs is particularly complex as there are two arrangement systems. When the Maritime Museum began to collect photographs in the 1950s, photographic collections were not kept together. Instead, individual photographs were arranged in a classification system according to size and form of image, thereunder by geographical location, and thereunder type of view. This classified collection was indexed on handwritten cards, with a typed catalog begun for a portion of this collection. The park began managing the photographic collections according to archival principles about 1978.

Archival holdings can be described at any level of aggregation, whether at the repository level, collection level, series level, container level, folder level, or the item level. At the repository level, the J. Porter Shaw Library and the Historic Documents Department report to appropriate directories of libraries, archives, special collection, maritime history, and the like. Collection-level description varies. At a minimum, all collections are accessioned and added to the ANCS accession database.* Properly documented deeds of gift or loan forms are executed for all accessions. As they are accessioned, all materials are rehousing in acid free boxes and housed on shelving or flat files.

Finding Aids. Since 1984, WordPerfect and dBase have been used to produce a basic control document, or *finding aid*, for each collection. The finding aid typically includes elements such as an administrative history or biography, scope and

A volunteer dusts a Hicks Engine marine drawing covered with oily dirt from the machinist's shop where it was used to build engines. Photo by Campbell/Danford courtesy San Francisco Maritime National Historical Park.

content note, and series descriptions, followed by elements produced with dBase, such as the folder or item description and the index of vessel names, vessel types, personal names, place names, organizational names, subjects, and document types. Index terms from all collections are integrated into a master index, so that researchers can find the collections useful to their work. These finding aids are printed out and used in paper form. The dBase program is also used to print out envelopes and labels.

Cataloging. An ANCS record has been produced for accountability, but has not been used for access. In 1997, SAFR served as one of the test sites for ANCS+ (see page 34, this issue) so departmental staff now have access to ANCS data through the park network.

SAFR archivists made many suggestions for the archives module in ANCS+ and wrote the field definitions and help screens for it. The existing finding aids, including both the WordPerfect text and the dBase indexes, will be migrated to the archives module in ANCS+ this year and will give us integrated online access to nearly all our holdings.

The department has adopted the Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC) standard for collection level cataloging, and has reported some collections to the Research Library Information Network (RLIN). We look forward to having the MARC export function in ANCS+. We will use it to take all our legacy data, bring it to national standards for data content (APPM) and data values (LCSH, AAT, NAF), and export to the national bibliographical databases, such as RLIN and the Online Computer Library Consortium (OCLC) and to the local online public access catalogs (OPAC) and local networks.

In 1999, staff are also learning to implement the Standardized General Markup Language (SGML) for the Encoded Archival Description (EAD) (see page 28, this issue) to allow for easy interchange and distribution of finding aids across an internet working environment. The department is working with the University of California at Berkeley to encode our finding aids. This will increase the accessibility of the collections to staff and the public. Digital images can be attached either to the ANCS+ database or the EAD finding aid so that users can access the images in the con-



text of their description without having to wait for the staff to pull the images. The advent of digitization is most exciting in its potential to provide access to a visual surrogate of the item itself. Much of the existing item-level indexing can be linked to a scanned image of the item itself.

Archives are tools and like all tools, they are kept to be used. Reference services for historic documents are provided by the reference staff of the J. Porter Shaw Library. The Historic Documents Department provides additional reference services, especially for complex queries regarding plans, manuscripts, and photographs, publications, or copyright. The SAFR photographic laboratory is equipped to copy and reproduce most forms of images.

At San Francisco Maritime NHP, archives take on another life. They are used by park staff, scholars, students, and the general public from around the world for a wide variety of public and private purposes. The archives are used in producing exhibits, books, magazine articles, genealogies, ship models, films, and videos. Thus the archives here have a multiplier effect, bringing a deeper understanding of maritime history to millions of people beyond the reading room, helping them, and us, to nurture and understand our inheritance from the past and our connection to the sea.

Note

* ANCS is the NPS Museum Management Program Automated National Catalog System.

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